

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PONTA DELGADA 0259

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SUBJECT: LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS AT LAJES AND BASE NEGOTIATIONS

REF: LISBON 5210(DTG 071152Z JUL 77)
PONTA DELGADA 0241(NOTAL)

1. REGIONAL SECRETARY FOR LABOR, ANTONIO LAGARTO, TOLD ME ON JULY 13 THAT THE IMMEDIATE LABOR PROBLEMS AT LAJES WERE RESOLVED, THE NEW WAGES PAID BY USFORAZ WERE VERY GOOD AND THE WORKERS PLEASED. HE ATTRIBUTED MUCH OF THE PREVIOUS AGITATION TO TWO KNOWN COMMUNISTS ACTIVE IN THE UNIONS. HE SAID THE COMMISSION, RECENTLY ESTABLISHED BY THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY TO LOOK IN TO WORKING CONDITIONS AT LAJES, WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO IN VIEW OF THE NEW WAGE SCALE.

2. LAGARTO STRONGLY BELIEVES THAT THE UNIONS SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN LABOR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE AMERICANS AT LAJES. HE WOULD NOT ELIMINATE THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY AUTHORITIES FROM THE PROCESS, BUT FAVORS TRIPARTITE NEGOTIATIONS--AMERICANS, PORTUGUESE MILITARY AND THE UNIONS. LAGARTO DECLARED THAT ACHIEVING THIS ARRANGEMENT IS ONE OF THE PRIMARY GOALS OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT IN BASE NEGOTIATIONS. HE EXPLAINED THAT AS LONG AS REAL ISSUES EXIST, SUCH AS THE UNIONS RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE
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IN LABOR NEGOTIATIONS, THE COMMUNISTS CAN EXPLOIT THE LABOR SITUATION AT LAJES. HE ADDED THAT IN LABOR DISPUTES THE ROLE OF THE PORTUGUESE MILITARY, PARTICULARLY THAT OF THE AIR ZONE COMMANDER, WAS LITTLE MORE THAN THAT OF A MESSENGER BOY AND THAT THE INCUMBENT ZONE COMMANDER FELT UNCOMFORTABLE IN THAT POSITION.

3. COMMENT: WHEN THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY IN NOVEMBER RATIFIED THE AZOREAN GOVERNMENT'S GOALS FOR THE LAJES BASE NEGOTIATIONS, PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF BASE WORKERS WAS AT THE TOP OF THE LIST. LAGARTO'S COMMENTS INDICATE THAT THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT MAINTAINS THIS POSITION THAT LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS AT LAJES BELONG IN BASE RENEWAL NEGOTIATIONS. THE FACT THAT AN AZOREAN REPRESENTATIVE WAS PRESENT AT THE JUNE 17 MEETING WHEN THE ISSUE WAS DISCUSSED SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT TO KEEP LABOR QUESTIONS IN MILITARY-TO-MILITARY CHANNELS. IT WAS ALSO CLEAR THAT THE AZOREANS DID NOT BELIEVE ANY IMPORTANT ISSUES WOULD BE DISCUSSED ON JUNE 17 AND THAT THE AZOREAN PRESENT WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO MAKE ANY AGREEMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT. VARIOUS AZOREANS, INCLUDING REIS LEITE AND MOTA AMARAL, HAVE MADE THE POINT THAT A NUMBER OF ISSUES REMAIN TO BE RESOLVED BETWEEN THE GOP AND THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT BEFORE THE PORTUGUESE CAN NEGOTIATE WITH THE USG, AND LABOR RELATIONS AT LAJES APPEARS TO BE ONE.

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